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SUBJECT: CANADA ISSUES STRONG STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR IRAQI PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

REF: SECSTATE 225860

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Government of Canada has issued a very strong statement of support for Iraq's Parliamentary Elections. Text is carried in para 4. The Ambassador has and will continue to cite the elections as a positive development in his public appearances. In addition, Elections Canada, which led the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE), has praised the way in which the elections were conducted. Its statement is contained in para. 5. End Summary

¶2. (SBU) Elections Canada head Jean Pierre Kingsley called the Embassy December 15 in the afternoon to report back from his election monitoring teams in Amman and Baghdad. Kingsley said the IMIE was able to successfully tie in the EU team and other national and independent monitors and believe this will yield an even more thorough review than in the previous round. In general, Kingsley said that the monitoring was going smoothly and the election itself appeared to be the best organized yet. With 3 hours to go he reported 50% turnout, and expected the end of the day total turnout to be 60-70%, with substantial Sunni participation. He reported some problems in the north with distribution of voting materials, and a slow opening in Fallujah, but overall less violence than in the past. Kingsley said that his observers will be participating in extensive media events later in the day, and he was pressing for a strong statement of support by the Arab League and other observer groups.

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador called Kingsley to congratulate him on December 16 and Kingsley was very appreciative of the recognition. Ambassador will publicly praise the involvement of the Government of Canada in leading this very successful monitoring effort. Any statements by Department officials to this end would also be appreciated by the Government of Canada and would help to maintain Canadian involvement in the next phase of the electoral process in Iraq, building an indigenous capacity, something Canada has expressed an interest in actively supporting.

¶4. (U) Statements by the GOC and Elections Canada are included below:

Text of Statement by the Government of Canada on Iraq's Parliamentary Elections:

Begin Text:

The Government of Canada today issued the following statement on the election of the Council of Representatives in Iraq:

We wish to offer our congratulations to the people of Iraq on their participation in this election, whether from their homeland or from one of the 15 countries, including Canada, where they were able to vote.

We are pleased to note the positive preliminary assessment of the organization and conduct of the polling, carried out by the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) led by Jean-Pierre Kingsley, Chair of the IMIE and Chief Electoral Officer of Canada. Although some issues will merit further review, early indications are that the elections were fair overall. This election marks the final step in Iraq's transition to democracy, as specified in June 2004 by the United Nations Security Council.

We praise the courage demonstrated by voters and candidates throughout the various stages of Iraq's transition to democracy. Despite the high level of personal risk involved, the citizens of Iraq proved their commitment to democratic change. Thanks to their determination, Iraqis will have a democratically elected government derived from their own constitution, which was endorsed in a referendum last October.

We are particularly pleased to note that Iraqis from all regions, including provinces with a Sunni Arab majority, have participated in this election, and that the new electoral system ensures a fair representation of Iraq's minorities. This should provide the new Iraqi government with the broad-based representation and enhanced legitimacy it needs

to further develop a national consensus on the future of Iraq.

Canada will continue to assist the Iraqi government in its efforts to implement the new constitution and to build democratic and effective governing institutions, in collaboration with the United Nations and the international community. In 2003, Canada established a \$300-million development fund to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq, to be disbursed by the end of 2010. End Text

15. (U) Text of Preliminary Assessment of Iraqi Referendum by the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE); Amman, Jordan, October 15, 2005
Begin Text:

The International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) has been meeting in Amman, Jordan, to review preliminary assessments on the preparations for and conduct of the Iraqi constitutional referendum. These preliminary assessments are based on information prepared for the IMIE by international electoral experts, and on reports from the IMIE field office in Iraq, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and domestic observer groups. The IMIE will further analyze these reports and assessments, and will publish its findings on the IMIE Web site (www.imie.ca) and provide them to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI).

These preliminary assessments and observations indicate that the IECI has made significant operational improvements since the January 2005 elections.

"The IMIE is encouraged by these assessments. They have highlighted that, despite the tremendous security risks and obvious logistical difficulties which exist in Iraq, the IECI has developed and implemented a referendum process that generally conforms to internationally recognized electoral standards. These include the legal framework, planning, procedures and logistics," said Paul Dacey, Vice-Chair of the IMIE Steering Committee and Deputy Electoral Commissioner from the Australian Electoral Commission.

"The IECI is to be congratulated on its tremendous achievements, as it continues building the necessary foundations to ensure the progress of democracy in Iraq, particularly given the short time frames and extremely difficult circumstances facing Iraq in this period of transition," added Dr. Zoltan Toth, fellow IMIE Steering Committee member and Secretary-General of the Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials.

The IMIE's early assessments identify the many positive aspects of today's referendum, including the extent and quality of the IECI's overall planning and operations, the updating of the voters register and the voter education initiatives that were established.

Farouq Al-Amad, General Coordinator, Arab Commission for Civil Society, League of Arab States, said that he "welcomed the continued involvement of the IMIE in the process in Iraq and for its ongoing assistance as Iraq heads toward the national election in December. The IMIE adds an important dimension to the processes of openness, transparency and coordination."

"The courage and personal resolve of the people of Iraq to turn out to vote in such large numbers, particularly in the face of such personal risks and threats is nothing but admirable," said Mr. Dacey.

The IMIE preliminary reports stressed that the IECI has been under significant pressure to manage three electoral events within a period of one year. In many countries with long-established democratic institutions, such a major undertaking would be a significant, perhaps insurmountable challenge. The IMIE congratulates the IECI for its ability to perform under demanding time frames, difficult security conditions and close scrutiny by the international community.

The IMIE would also like to acknowledge the professionalism of the IECI in reacting to procedural issues as they arose during the day.

The IMIE views the upcoming December 15 elections for the Iraqi National Assembly as a crucial step forward in the democratic electoral process in Iraq and looks forward to the continuation of its advisory role to the IECI.
End Text

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